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EYES ONLY AMBASSADOR

Please deliver following message to de Gaulle:

QUOTE May 5, 1961  
Dear President de Gaulle:

In the conversations which our Ambassador in Moscow had with Mr. Khrushchev in the period after my Administration came into office, the question arose of a possible personal meeting between Mr. Khrushchev and myself. I indicated at that time that I hoped to make a trip to Europe perhaps in the late spring when the opportunity might present itself for us to have a QTE get acquainted UNQTE meeting and exchange views.

Since that time you, Mr. President, have been good enough to invite me to pay an official visit to Paris at the end of this month to which I look forward with keen anticipation. Also since that time the deterioration in the general situation had caused me to suspend active consideration of a meeting with Khrushchev. However

Drafted by: EUR:FDKohler:mt  
5/5/61

Telegraphic transmission and  
classification approved by:

S/S - Mr. Manfull

Clearance:

Cleared with the Secretary and the President.

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However Khrushchev has now again caused the subject to be raised with Ambassador Thompson and indicated his own desire for an early meeting. I am now therefore faced with the problem of going ahead with this or of withdrawing from my previous indication of my willingness to do so during this period. In view of my heavy commitments here, with the Congress in session, it would seem that the only practicable arrangement would be for me to meet with Khrushchev for a day, probably in Vienna, immediately after my visit to Paris. I would plan to ask the Secretary of State to return briefly to Paris immediately afterwards for the purpose of informing you about these talks.

I have given Mr. Khrushchev an interim answer saying that while I still agree in principle that a meeting would be useful, I am not in a position to make a firm commitment at the moment but expect to be able to do so by the time he returns to Moscow, May 20.

My present disposition is to proceed with the plans outlined above provided there are no further untoward developments meanwhile. I would assume you would share my view that since I have not previously met Khrushchev such an encounter would be useful in the present international situation. It will of course be most helpful for me to have the opportunity to consult with you on the eve of these talks with him.

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I have discussed this question only with the Secretary of State and a few immediate counselors and of course hope that it can be kept completely confidential until we reach and announce a decision.

Sincerely,

John F. Kennedy.

UNQUOTE

RUSK

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